

December 12, 2007

Dear Mr. Charles Dickens,

Recently, I read Great Expectations, a novel you authored. Among the many titles I have read, I don't think any have taught me as many valuable lessons—or left as much of an impression on me—as your novel. Great Expectations is not an action-on-every-page adventure story or fantasy novel, but the book does not need a dramatic plot loaded with suspense to get its point across. I really believe that these lessons couldn't have been shown in a better way: they were simple, yet tremendously important.

Perhaps the lesson that impacted me the most deeply was the fact that, if you want to be successful, it is better to work hard at your goals—*yourself*. If you have your fortune handed to you by someone else, then you lose the freedom to do what you want with your success. You have to wait for someone else to give you the go-ahead signal so you know that you are free to use your wealth the way you want. You can't really *fully* redeem the independence to use your fortune unless you've completely earned it.

Another significant lesson this book exemplifies is that, if and when you are successful, you shouldn't forget who helped you on the way up, be it your parents, a friend, or some other person. In the plot, after Pip, the protagonist, becomes successful and moves away to London, he forgets that when he was kid, Joe was the only person who ever showed him any respect. When Pip returned to his hometown later in the story, he forgot to pay even a small visit to Joe. In my opinion, he didn't repay Joe at all for everything he had done. A prosperous lifestyle is worthless if you have dreadful—or nonexistent—relationships with other people.

Yet another essential lesson the novel taught was learning how to deal with pressure-filled situations. When Pip is faced with difficult decisions, he often makes mistakes and sometimes doesn't realize it; he becomes overwhelmed by the stress of having “great expectations” placed upon him. This is a reminder that it is important to maintain your composure—as well as your sanity—when handling pressure.

I thought your book was particularly compelling because, to me, school is important. If you do well in school, you will have many more options later in life. I try to do my best on schoolwork and I work hard to reach my goals. I also realize that there are a lot of people who have helped me in my path to achievement—people such as my parents, my grandparents, my younger brother, and some of my friends. These individuals help encourage me and provide good advice when I need it most. I thought that Great Expectations was an excellent reminder that you should exert yourself toward your goals and not overlook who provided you with support and encouragement on your way up the ladder to accomplishment.

I can honestly say that your story is one of the most powerful books I have ever read, simply because it reinforced many important lessons that I will try to consider in the future. It provoked me to think about a lot of things, and that is why I believe it was so inspiring.

Sincerely,

Alex Pijanowski

Alex Pijanowski, Grade 8